

ON PEACE

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

PEACE IS MORE THAN THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING

“We came in peace for all mankind.” This message carried into the sky by astronauts illustrates our love of using the word “peace” at momentous times. Peace is something grand for all people on earth, and peace is also part of the private yearning of solitary individuals. We sense something wonderful when we read of peace in the Bible.

Looking it up in the dictionary one finds it defined as the absence of something or freedom from something. Freedom from strife, absence of war or hostilities. Peace of mind is said to be freedom from mental disturbance.

When Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and came to people he greeted them with the words, “Peace be unto you.” In prophecy he had been called by Isaiah “the Prince of Peace.”

In one discourse Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you that in me you may have peace.” Especially moving are his words in John 14. “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” (verse 27).

Peace is not merely the absence of something. It is something in itself. Ah, but how to define it? My favorite theologian is Emanuel Swedenborg, and he confessed that he could not with words do justice to the reality of peace. He gives it a try.

In *True Christian Religion* he says that spiritual peace may be compared in some ways with natural human experiences. He cites the way a mother feels after child birth. He cites “the state of mind experienced by those who, after storms and dangers on the sea, reach a port and set foot on the longed for land.” And he mentions the feeling we experience after a long or severe winter when we our senses are greeted by the wonder of springtime.

In the book *Heaven and Hell* a chapter is devoted to the peace enjoyed by angels of heaven. There we read that “peace is like the morning time or dawn in spring, when, once the night has passed, all things of earth begin to take new life from the rising of the sun; the dew that falls from heaven spreads a leafy fragrance far and wide, and springtime’s gentle warmth makes meadows fertile and instills its charm in human minds as well. This is because morning or dawn in springtime corresponds to the state of peace of angels in heaven.”

Elsewhere he says, “Peace has in it confidence in the Lord, that he directs all things and provides all things, and that he leads to a good end. When a person is in this faith he is in peace, for he then fears nothing, and no solicitude about things to come disquiets him.”

Approaching a definition, Swedenborg says that peace is a kind of human delight, but it is the deepest kind of delight. It is something you may have way down inside you even when there is outward turmoil. Furthermore peace is something we experienced in our early childhood. Those earliest years, says Swedenborg, had a playful quality because of the presence of peace, a peace inflowing from God in heaven.

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